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The Proportional Representation Society

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1948-49

This Report reviews the elections which have taken place during the year in many countries, indicating the influence on representation and on government of the method of election used in each case. It is the only review of this kind published in this country. It also deals with the activities of the Society.

WHICH IS RIGHT ?

"Proportional representation is not conducive to the best form of Parliamentary government. . . . I would sooner have governments with strength and power behind them—even though I do not agree with them—so long as they observe the democratic forms, than a Parliament which can only live by the making and unmaking and re-making of Coalitions and bargains of all sorts."

Rt. Hon. HERBERT MORRISON, M.P.,
House of Commons, 17th February, 1948.

"Nowhere in the world does parliamentary government function better to-day than in Scandinavia."

BEN A. ARNESON,
*"The Democratic Monarchies of
Scandinavia," 1939.*

"P.R. has been a unifying force, and unity is strength. . . . A Government with a majority of six under P.R. is infinitely stronger than a Government with a majority of sixty elected otherwise."

Rev. CANON LUCE, D.D.,
Irish Times, 23rd June, 1938.

The past year has brought us some important elections and much opportunity to watch how electoral systems of various kinds have affected the governments brought into being by them. In particular, we now have a good deal of evidence regarding the country most often quoted (by people who should know better) as an example of the alleged evil effects of proportional representation.

FRANCE

The four years since a proportional system was first adopted in France are still too short a period for statistical comparison with the eleven years (up to the outbreak of war) during which France had single-member constituencies with the second ballot, especially when we take out of those four years the initial period of constitution-making which ended only with the adoption of the present constitution in October, 1946. It is, however, already clear that the tendency to instability in French governments has not increased since 1945, let alone originated since then. There have been five French Prime Ministers in the two and a half years since the constitution was adopted, compared with four in the best period of equal length under the second ballot (1935-38) and nine in the worst (1931-34). The greatest contrast is in the impression produced on foreign observers. A typical pre-war comment is this from "Europa" in 1933, which might have been repeated at any time up to the Occupation :—

" The average duration of Governments in France is between eight and nine months. Since the War," in spite of the two relatively long Ministries of M. Poincaré, the general instability has been strongly marked and many people are beginning to speculate on the future of Parliamentary institutions in a country where the multiplicity of parties, or rather groups, without clear doctrines, or at any rate without serious desire to apply their doctrines, almost indistinguishable from each other, undisciplined, purely opportunist in policy, finding their advantage—that is to say, a rotation of political posts—in constant upheavals, prevents the establishment of conditions in which solid work can be done and the confidence of the people in its representatives be maintained." (*1914-1918)

There has been nothing comparable with this in post-war comment. There have been recurring fears—especially during the 1948 crisis, which left France without a government for fourteen days—that the old weaknesses in self-government would reassert themselves and open the way to government by a dictator. These fears, however, have in each case proved groundless, and more and more the commentators have begun cautiously to say that France does at last appear to be achieving stability. Of many comments by responsible critics (in addition to those quoted last year), the following are typical :—

" In the face of Gaullist and Communist pressure, the Government coalition of Radicals, Socialists and Popular Republicans has resisted the impulse to commit political *hara kiri* at the slightest provocation ; it has shown a new spirit of internal compromise on such controversial questions as military expenditure, church schools, Indo-China, the management of the nationalised industries and wages and prices."

ROBERT STEPHENS,

The Observer, 6th March, 1949.

" Numerous divisions have shown, since the beginning of the year, that the (government's) majority has become more broadly, and thus more firmly, based."

Le Monde, 15th March, 1949.

" The dominant note is one of fresh confidence in the tried methods of parliamentary government."

The Times, 10th May, 1949.

The expectations of those who say proportional representation leads to instability have therefore been disappointed, while our contention that fair play promotes stability has received further confirmation. That the association of a fairer voting system with greater stability is not mere accident is indicated by the tendency of Premier Queuille and others to base their policy and their claim to office on the solid foundation of popular support. Since the French constitution still makes the dissolution of her parliament very difficult, general elections in France are normally less frequent than in Britain ; it is fortunate that the peculiar circumstances of constitution-making produced an exception to this rule immediately after the introduction of proportional representation. As shown in our 1946 and subsequent Reports, the three general elections of 1945-46, with their very similar results, made it clear that French opinion was steady, showing no inclination to rush to extremes, even in protest against unpleasant living conditions. After the experience of three elections which incontestably showed the popular will, it is noteworthy that in the 1949 cantonal elections both Government and Opposition looked behind the misleading figures of seats to the *votes* which really mattered. These elections were conducted not by proportional representation but under the second ballot in single-member constituencies—as parliamentary elections were before 1945—and they gave the following result :—

Party	Votes (1st ballot)	1st ballot	Seats 2nd ballot	Total
<i>Government.</i>				
Socialist	1,206,895	143	217	360
Radical-Socialist	984,012	142	134	276
M.R.P.	579,390	35	75	110
Government total	2,770,297	320	426	746
<i>Opposition.</i>				
Communist	1,689,764	17	20	37
R.P.F. (de Gaulle)	1,821,021	170	219	389
P.R.L. etc. (Right)	897,533	216	118	334
Grand total	7,178,615	723	783	1506

(These figures may differ slightly from those published elsewhere, because the classification of R.P.F. candidates is sometimes disputable.)

Fortunately, the French, by now accustomed to a proportional system which draws attention to the parties' total votes, paid less attention to the apparent Gaullist success and Communist disaster than to the real absence of any marked change in public opinion. The government has treated the election as confirming the fact of its popular support, and nobody seems inclined seriously to dispute this interpretation.

The only change likely as a result of the local elections is a further broadening of the Queuille government's basis, bringing in one or two more Ministers on the Right. This again would be in accordance with the theory of what should happen under proportional representation—the parties cannot escape from the real will of the electors (however inconvenient they may find it!) and are forced to co-operate in government, adapting that government as time goes on to the significant, but usually gradual, changes of public opinion.

THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

The opposite effect of a majority system of election is unhappily exemplified in a municipality as important as many a small State.

The result of the L.C.C. election of April, 1949, was sensational, giving a Labour-Conservative tie with one Liberal (Sir Percy Harris, valued member of the P.R. Society's committee, whom we congratulate on his re-election) holding the balance. To this Society,

the main interest of that position lies in the reaction to it of the parties and of the public. As regards the two main parties, it must be recorded that Labour's first reaction was to try to escape from the voters' decision, while the Conservatives claimed that their majority of votes entitled them to control—quite forgetting their own refusal to consider adoption of the reform which would give majority and minority alike their due. We are glad to record that wiser counsels in the Labour Party prevailed over those who at first wished to take all the eleven Aldermen—the Conservatives were allowed to elect five—but on both sides the assumption existed that the government of London could not be carried on unless one party or the other had "control"—unless there were a "working majority" of at least ten, to ensure that the dominant party could always get its own way!

That view of local government is, however, by no means universal among the governed. The man in the street appeared more often to agree with the opinion expressed by the *Economist* before the election—that the best thing for County Hall would be a very small majority one way or the other—and people canvassed on the day the result became known showed a marked tendency to welcome the tie and to hope that the parties would combine to govern in the interests of all Londoners; they did not fear either that such government would be weak or that the balancing party would have too much power. There is evidence that some Labour members who at first wished to consolidate their position by electing all the eleven new Aldermen were dissuaded from this by an outcry from the rank and file. *Tribune* (a left-wing Labour paper) featured an editorial comment which provoked somewhat heated correspondence, still continuing as we go to press:—"We sincerely hope that nothing more will be heard of the proposal to fill the aldermanic vacancies on the L.C.C. with nominees of the Labour group by appointing an outside chairman and using his casting vote. London has chosen a 50-50 representation, and the Labour group should accept that democratic decision. Whatever the precedents and whatever the decision about the chairmanship, the creation of a fake permanent majority would be repugnant to the principles of democracy." Weighty support for government by agreement came from other organs of the press. The *Manchester Guardian*, the morning after the result, expressed "the hope that the London

councillors will remember that, in the long run, the decencies and good temper of democratic government may be worth more than temporary party control of the council obtained by expedients which will leave an ugly scar of outraged sensibilities. The suggestion is that London might take a leaf out of Manchester's book, and abandon for the time being the attempt to form an "administration" with all the committee chairmen of the same political colour. In the city council here, where the balance of power has shifted from time to time and no party has ever claimed a monopoly of departmental leadership, we have enjoyed local government of high quality and friendly spirit." *The Times*, on the eve of the Council's first meeting, declared that "There is only one decent and democratic way of breaking the deadlock brought about at County Hall by the tie in last week's elections. That is for the Labour and Conservative Parties to make a definite working agreement to govern London together." "In London as in national politics party government is a practical necessity in ordinary circumstances for the reasons set out long ago by Burke, but it is no more than a means to a larger end, not an end in itself. All the conditions now exist for a coalition in London. The electors have decreed it—as indeed, by returning roughly equal numbers of the two main parties at next year's General Election they could decree something like it across the river at Westminster. The decisions made this week at County Hall can supply a notable vindication—or the reverse—of the standard of public life to-day."

Sir Percy Harris, as his friends in the P.R. Society would expect, naturally did his best to bring about such a solution, and his speech in the opening debate was described by several papers as the best of the day. Although he was unable to prevent London's having again a one-party government, that government has a majority of only ten and we expect there will be many opportunities for Sir Percy to play the part of peacemaker as he desires.

The result of the London County Council election is given below. There was a marked and gratifying rise in the poll to 40.6 per cent.—which, however, is still very low compared with the Irish County Council elections referred to on page 14—but this did not mean that the London voters' wishes were properly reflected in their Council.

	Candidates	Votes	Seats won	Seats under P.R.
Conservative ...	126	1,526,000	64	63
Labour ...	129	1,405,805	64	62
Liberal ...	6	37,266	1	3
Communist ...	6	26,666	0	1
Union Movement	2	1,253	0	0
Independent ...	1	617	0	0
	<hr/> 270	<hr/> 2,997,607	<hr/> 129	<hr/> 129

The "seats under P.R." are deduced from an examination of each Division separately. As Sir Percy Harris's personal votes came mainly from "plumpers" rather than from cross-voters, it is likely that the transfer of his large surplus would have resulted in the election of a second Liberal in Bethnal Green; the third would probably have been elected in Stoke Newington and Hackney North, where the Liberal vote was sufficiently near the quota to have a good chance of being brought up to it by transfers from other parties' candidates. (Failing a Liberal there, Labour would have won an additional seat.) With only three-member constituencies, accurate proportionality cannot be guaranteed, but we could be sure that there would be no gross distortion of the voters' will. The actual result happened to be not far from proportional, but this was merely accidental. In North Kensington, for example, all three seats were won by Conservatives, but if only 323 out of the 23,000 voters there had been persuaded to vote Labour instead of Conservative, all three seats would have gone to Labour, and that party would then have had a clear majority of five Council seats although the Conservatives would still have had a clear majority of votes. Under P.R., so small a turnover in any constituency could affect at the most one seat. Moreover, P.R. could be relied upon to prevent the present monopoly of representation by one party which occurs in almost every constituency. In the previous election (1946), there was no Division in which two parties shared the representation; in 1949 there were only two. P.R., on the contrary, would have resulted in the sharing of representation in 38 out of the present 43 Divisions; only three Divisions would have returned all Conservative members, and two all Labour.

OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

A similar situation, in reverse, arose in **Glasgow**, in May, 1949, where also, on account of a redistribution of Wards, there was a general election to fill all the City Council seats. This election resulted in a majority of one seat for Labour. The Glasgow Council however has also two non-elected members, the Dean of Guild and the Deacon Convenor. These offices date back about five hundred years, and the right of the holders to full Council membership has been re-affirmed by Parliament three times within the past hundred years, the last occasion being by the present Parliament, in 1947. With what had happened in April on the L.C.C. fresh in the public mind, the question of the hour became "Would these two non-elected members vote to defeat the appointment of a Labour Lord Provost?". The London *Evening Standard* came out promptly and unequivocally against these two votes being used in this way. In fact, however, these two non-elected members did use their votes to secure the election of a Progressive Lord Provost. This reversal of the result of the public poll much annoyed the Labour members, whose reaction was to refuse all Chairmanships. The reversal, however, would appear to be justified, since there was a majority of votes on the Progressive side. The total figures were as follows :—

	Candidates	Votes	Seats Won	Seats under P.R.
Progressive ...	93	530,894	55	59
Labour ...	101	499,213	56	49
I.L.P. ...	17	16,578	0	1
Ind. Socialist ...	3	9,480	0	1
Independents ...	5	7,756	0	1
Scottish Nat. ...	3	4,065	0	0
Communist ...	9	8,638	0	0
	<hr/> 231	<hr/> 1,076,624	<hr/> 111	<hr/> 111

There were three- or four-cornered contests in 17 Wards, but in only three of these were seats won on minority votes, Labour securing seven and the Progressives two of the nine seats involved. In the other 20 Wards there were straight fights between Labour and Progressives; representation was shared in only one of these Wards.

The above totals, however, are not in themselves conclusive, for neither of the main parties fought every seat—there were ten Wards where the minority party (Progressive in six cases, Labour in four), knowing the fight was hopeless, nominated only one candidate to keep its opponents' workers busy. Closer examination, however, tends to the view that the popular verdict is really for the Progressives. Taking each of the 37 three-member Wards separately, as we did for the L.C.C., we find that the application of the single transferable vote would have given a Progressive majority as shown in the last column. As a check on this, we may estimate the number of *voters* of each party (as distinct from votes) by adding the votes obtained by only one candidate (the highest) of each party in each Ward contested, thus eliminating differences due to the varying numbers of candidates. This gives an approximate total of 203,000 Progressive voters and 179,000 Labour voters, with an average of 5708 votes for each Progressive and 4943 for each Labour candidate.

Again, all this argument, all the bad feeling which has been stirred up, would have been avoided if only the method of election had been fair and less importance had been attached to "control" of the Council.

Plymouth also had a general election for its Council, on account of redistribution, and another close result. Here, we are glad to say, a better spirit appears to prevail, the Conservatives (who have a majority of one Councillor) having announced that they will not take more than their share either of Aldermen or of Chairmanships, and we shall follow the proceedings of the Council with interest. Even so, the voting system has done serious injury to the town. As the *Western Independent* says, "The overshadowing of the practical issues of local government by the political caucus is only too clearly illustrated in the Plymouth elections. A system which results in the rejection on the one hand of Mr. Medland, an able and experienced man with a passion for Plymouth and one of the Council's most effective debaters, and on the other of Mr. L. F. Paul, and also prevents the election of any Plymothian who is a political Liberal, condemns itself."

Derbyshire County Council furnishes another example both of misrepresentation and of the bad spirit which it engenders. With

only one Councillor (Labour) elected on a "split vote," the result of the election was as follows :—

	Votes	Seats
Labour and Independents opposing Conservatives ...	73,898	26
Conservatives and Independents opposing Labour ...	74,218	21

Two other Independents were elected in Wards not contested by either Conservative or Labour candidates. There were 21 unopposed returns, bringing the composition of the Council to Labour 38, Conservative 11, Independent 21. The Labour majority then proceeded to fill the aldermanic vacancies (so that it has all the 23 Aldermen), and that in a way that caused particular resentment. Seven of the new Aldermen were elected from among the Councillors, thus reducing the Labour Councillors for the time being to 31 and putting them in a minority of one for the purpose of further elections. But, at another meeting of the County Council a week later, as those seven new Aldermen had not yet signed their form of acceptance of office as Aldermen, they were held to be still Councillors and therefore entitled to vote in the filling of one remaining aldermanic vacancy.

This action was probably taken as an insurance against possible large losses at the next election—to make sure that at least as many Labour Aldermen as possible would survive any landslide ; thus we see how the unfairness of our electoral system tempts the parties to use questionable methods. We recall a quotation from the *Daily Herald* of the 15th April, 1931 : " All the Labour members of Bristol City Council walked out of the Council Chamber yesterday as a protest against what they term the oppressive use of the Citizen Party's vote on the aldermanic question ;" and one from the *Birkenhead News* the following year : " Blow for blow has been the rule for several years past . . . and the present bitterness of feeling . . . tends to put magnanimity out of court." The blood feud continues, and can be broken only by a just electoral system.

EIRE (REPUBLIC OF IRELAND)

In Eire, the election recorded in our last Annual Report led to the first instance in that country of several parties co-operating in government. At the time of the election it was said that those

parties agreed only in disliking de Valera and could not be united. Mr. de Valera himself, speaking in the Carlow-Kilkenny election, where polling was a few days later than in the rest of the country, said that "a coalition government formed from the five or six parties now opposing Fianna Fail . . . obviously could not last. Such a government, if it ever tried to get down to serious work, would fly apart, and we should be faced with another general election within a few months." The political correspondent of the *Irish Press* (Fianna Fail) said that "if (in Carlow-Kilkenny) the balance goes to the opposition parties, there would appear to be no alternative to an early general election." It did—and fifteen months later there is no sign of another general election. Frank MacDermot, in the *Sunday Times*, thought that "one way or another Ireland seems doomed to a shaky government for some time to come."

The parties concerned in the coalition, however, did not share that view. They were quite ready to try the experiment—General Mulcahy, leading Fine Gael's election campaign, declared that even if his party were elected with a clear majority over all others he would work to achieve co-operation with the other parties—and so far it has succeeded. The inter-party government seems as firmly established as its one-party predecessors.

This government also has provided the first practical proof that the single transferable vote really does do away with that evil of coalitions under the British system—the necessity for bargains between parties in the constituencies. In a by-election in East Donegal there was one Opposition candidate (Fianna Fail), one candidate of the largest Government party (Fine Gael) and one of another Government party (Clann na Poblachta). Both the Government candidates knew that, there being no possibility of "splitting the vote," they were free to put forward their own ideas without endangering those policies on which the Government parties were agreed. As it happened, Fianna Fail (which was expected to retain the seat) had a clear majority on the first count, polling 19,570 against 14,250 for the Fine Gael candidate and 1,435 for Clann na Poblachta.

Two other Irish elections have already been referred to—those of the **County Councils of Dublin and of Kerry**. The results were as follows :—

Dublin County Council. Five constituencies ; all seats contested. 46.6 per cent. poll ; less than 1 per cent. spoiled papers.

	Votes	Seats	Percentage of	
			Votes	Seats
Government parties :				
Fine Gael	13,023	10	35	40
Labour	4,280	2	12	8
Clann na Poblachta	3,740	2	10	8
Independents	1,691	1	5	4
Ratepayers	1,152	1	3	4
National Labour	251	0	1	0
	24,137	16	66	64
Opposition :				
Fianna Fail	12,302	9	34	36
	<u>36,439</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

Kerry County Council. Four constituencies ; all seats contested. 61 per cent. poll ; 1 per cent. spoiled papers.

	Votes	Seats	Percentage of	
			Votes	Seats
Government parties :				
Fine Gael	11,102	5	22	19
Clann na Poblachta	7,080	4	14	15
Clann na Talmhan	6,320	3	12	12
National Labour	3,398	1	7	4
Independents	2,936	2	6	8
Ind. Republican	2,362	1	4	4
Labour	1,509	0	3	0
	34,707	16	68	62
Opposition :				
Fianna Fail	16,477	10	32	38
	<u>51,184</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

Of special interest to us is the size of the poll. Dublin's 46.6 per cent. was deplored by the press as "low," and the 61 per cent. in Kerry was considered still "not good enough." When we remember that in London, with two great party machines working at full pressure, it was thought quite a triumph to get out 40.6 per

cent. of the electorate, it seems clear that the knowledge that one's vote will count really does make people more inclined to use it.

English people will no doubt regret that the Irish Government has felt it necessary to break the last formal link with the British Commonwealth, but the reasons for this lie deep in unhappy history and not in the recent elections. If the step had to be taken, it was at least much better taken as the united action of the whole nation—by a government including every party except one, and that one with a record of movement in the same direction. The change has occasioned no civil strife within Eire ; in fact to such an extent are the parties united on this issue that de Valera, leader of the Opposition, seconded Prime Minister Costello's motion protesting against the British Government's Ireland Bill.

NORTHERN IRELAND

This peaceful development in Eire is in contrast with the bitter quarrels in Northern Ireland over the same question. There, majority opinion is on the other side—for retention of Union with the Commonwealth—and the Government's position must be more difficult than in Eire because the dissident minority is much larger ; the natural difficulties are however unnecessarily increased by an electoral system which magnifies grievances and emphasises divisions. The abolition of P.R. in 1929 inevitably cast doubt on the Government's intention to deal fairly with its minorities ; it is freely alleged that the essential injustice of the single-member majority system has been deliberately increased by gerrymandering, and, even if this charge be untrue, it cannot be disproved to the satisfaction of the people affected. The minority feels itself in so hopeless a position that in the 1949 election for the Northern Ireland Parliament no less than 20 seats out of the total of 52 were uncontested. All the Unionist M.P.s are Protestants and all the Nationalists Roman Catholics—religious differences are thus emphasised. The issue of Union is made the sole question on which the people may vote : no Unionist will vote for a Nationalist, whom he considers to be an enemy of the State, or *vice versa* ; each supports his own candidate, no matter what that candidate's views may be on (say) industrial policy or the social services. Hence we get the absurd position of a Northern Ireland general election becoming a referendum on a question to which the answer is already known and furnishing no guide at all to the kind of

administration the country wishes its Unionist government to provide. Under P.R., of course, voters would be able to choose among candidates of different complexions within their own party, and the normal differences of internal politics would begin to cut across the barrier which now seems so all-important.

The Northern Ireland general election was held on the 10th February, 1949, and the result in the single-member constituencies was as follows :—

	Unionist		Nationalist		Labour Eire Labour Independent Lab.		Others	
	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
Belfast	103,385	10	—	—	30,482	0	623	0
Antrim	11,580	1	—	—	2,363	0		
Armagh	13,070	1	15,967	1				
Down	41,518	3	22,420	2	1,956	0	2,150	0
Fermanagh	13,895	2	15,582	1				
Londonderry	18,346	2	11,703	0				
Tyrone	32,408	2	35,773	3				
Total	<u>234,202</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>101,445</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>34,801</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2,773</u>	<u>0</u>
Uncontested seats		14		2		1		3
		35		9		1*		3†

*1 Independent Labour.

†2 Independent Unionists, 1 Socialist Republican.

The four members for Queen's University, Belfast, were elected by P.R., and the position there is very different. There were six candidates for the four seats, three of them women, although there were only two women candidates in all the rest of the country, and of those three two—both Independents—were elected. The Unionists had hoped to hold three seats, but, as in the English and Scottish universities, independence asserted itself and P.R. enabled the personal merits of the candidates to play their due part. Of two candidates elected on the first count, the second, Dr. Eileen Hickey, was an Independent; another Independent candidate, Mrs. Calvert, was very near the quota and later attained it by transfers from two of the Unionist candidates.

Prof. A. J. Allaway, M.A., an Ulsterman, has contributed the article which appears as an appendix (see page 46). We are happy to print this as an independent opinion.

SOUTH AFRICA

If the first-past-the-post voting system sets one Irishman against another, its effects in South Africa are no less deplorable. The general election of May 1948 is in fact the clearest demonstration there has been so far of the essential unfairness of the system. The result, with every contested seat won by a clear majority, was :—

						Votes	Seats
Smuts parties :	United Party	...	...	515,273	}	547,437	54 6 } 60
	Labour Party	...	...	32,164			
Malan parties :	Nationalist Party	...	...	400,453	}	442,338	69 9 } 78
	Afrikaner Party	...	...	41,885			
Others	...	...	...	...	...	76,279	0
						<u>1,066,054</u>	<u>138</u>

The election also furnished a notable example of the tendency of our voting system to exclude leading personalities from Parliament—General Smuts himself lost his seat and had to be restored to the Assembly by the resignation of one of his followers from a safe seat. The United Party *voters* had no say in these proceedings. They may have wanted Smuts to continue as their leader—in which case he ought never to have been defeated in the first place, and under P.R. would not have been—or they may have wanted a change, in which case it is undemocratic for the Party to be able to re-impose the old leadership.

In addition to the elected members shown in the table, the United Party had 11 candidates returned unopposed and the Nationalist Party one, therefore, since it is to be presumed that a party is strong where its opponents do not think it worth while to put up a candidate, the real popular majority on Smuts' side must be larger still.

Thus, the importance of this election lies, first, in the fact that it did not merely distort the will of the voters but actually reversed it. Secondly, no one can pretend that this reversal is a matter of no great importance. Those in this country who criticised the Smuts government for the timidity of its advance towards a somewhat greater equality of the races are the most alarmed that even this should have been replaced by open reaction towards more rigid segregation. Moreover, this is not merely the domestic

concern of South Africa, for among the victims of this policy are people who, though not subjects of India and Pakistan, are descendants of immigrants from there and are consequently of great interest to those two new States. Indian and Pakistan newspapers reacted strongly to the election result, calling it "deplorable," drawing attention to "Dr. Malan's known autocratic tendencies, his racial theories and his erstwhile worship of the Hitler cult," and wondering "whether it would be advisable to maintain relations with the Commonwealth system of which South Africa is an integral part." We are thankful to say that appreciation of the good points of the Commonwealth has prevailed over distrust of one of its members, but clearly this sort of thing does our family of nations no good. Within South Africa, the worsening of relations between the races showed itself in serious riots in Durban, and the tendency of injustice to produce extreme reactions appeared in the election of the three (white) representatives of the Bantu population after the other seats had been filled. One constituency returned a Communist by an overwhelming majority over his two opponents combined—a fact which is only too likely to be used in support of the allegation that the non-Europeans are unfit for even the tiny measure of political responsibility so far granted them.

Thirdly, the South African election is of great importance to those interested in fair representation, because there is no factor other than the voting system which can be blamed for the unrepresentative result. In Britain, attempts are continually being made to inveigle the smaller parties into electoral pacts on the plea that by "splitting the vote" they enable a minority to win. But in South Africa such pacts were made on both sides, and were 100 per cent. successful in preventing any single candidate from being elected on a minority vote—yet, as we have seen, a five-to-four vote for Smuts' side resulted in a victory for Malan.

Unable to believe that what seems perfectly fair when each single-member constituency is considered separately can be grossly unfair over the whole country, defenders of the majority system fall back on differences in the electorates of the various constituencies. Now, it is perfectly true that the electorates do differ considerably; it is perfectly true that Malan's strength lies mainly in the regions where electorates are small; it is perfectly true that

these facts *might* account for the anomalous result. But *do* they? Our opponents appear to have made no attempt to find out—but we have. We arranged the constituencies in two nearly equal groups, according to whether the number of people voting in each was above or below 8000, and this is the result we got :—

(a) 76 constituencies whose total poll is in each case 5 to 7½ thousand.

	Party :	Nationalist	Afrikaner	United	Labour
Votes	180,755	28,153	245,494	21,502
Seats	37	7	27	5
Votes per seat	4,886	4,022	9,090	4,300
<hr/>					
Votes	208,908		266,996	
Seats	44		32	
Votes per seat	4,748		8,344	

(b) 62 constituencies whose total poll is in each case 8 to 10½ thousand.

	Party :	Nationalist	Afrikaner	United	Labour
Votes	220,538	13,732	270,379	10,662
Seats	32	2	27	1
Votes per seat	6,892	6,866	10,000	10,700
<hr/>					
Votes	234,270		281,041	
Seats	34		28	
Votes per seat	6,890		10,037	

It is immediately obvious that in each of these groups of constituencies the party alliance with the fewer votes has the more seats, and that the extent of Malan's disproportionate advantage is not very different in the two cases.

To estimate the probable effect of equalizing electorates, we can assume either (i) that the smaller constituencies are raised to the size of the larger, or (ii) that the larger ones are made smaller.

In the smaller constituencies, we have :

Total votes ...	475,904
Seats ...	76
Average votes per seat ...	6,262

In the larger constituencies the corresponding figures are :

Votes ...	515,311
Seats ...	62
Average votes per seat ...	8,311

- (i) Dividing the total vote of the smaller constituencies by the average votes per seat of the larger, we get $475,904/8,311=57$ seats. If those 57 seats are divided between the two parties in the same ratio as the actual 76 seats, this gives

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{Malan} & \frac{44}{76} \times 57 & = 33 \text{ seats, i.e. a loss of } 11, \\ \text{Smuts} & \frac{32}{76} \times 57 & = 24 \text{ seats, i.e. a loss of } 8. \end{array}$$

Thus the Malan majority is reduced by 3 (and the total seats by 19)

- (ii) Dividing the total vote of the larger constituencies by the average votes per seat of the smaller gives $515,311/6,262=82$ seats. Dividing these in the same ratio as the actual 62 seats gives

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \text{Malan} & \frac{34}{62} \times 82 & = 45 \text{ seats, i.e., a gain of } 11 \\ \text{Smuts} & \frac{28}{62} \times 82 & = 37 \text{ seats, i.e., a gain of } 9 \end{array}$$

so that the Malan majority is raised by 2 (and the total seats by 20).

Hence, the proportion of seats won by the Malan parties is:—

$$\begin{array}{lcl} \text{actual :} & & 78 \text{ out of } 138 = 56.5\% \\ \text{under supposition (i) :} & 67 \text{ out of } 119 & = 56.3\% \\ \text{under supposition (ii) :} & 89 \text{ out of } 158 & = 56.3\% \end{array}$$

That is, making all constituencies approximately equal in the number of voters would have reduced Malan's majority by only about 0.2 per cent. The existing inequality of electorates cannot be a major cause of Malan's victory.

This analysis has been examined by a professional statistician unconnected with the P.R. Society and he can find no flaw in it. We challenge anyone else to try.

The subsequent election for the South African Senate was carried out by P.R., the constituencies being the five Provincial Councils together with the members of the Assembly for the Province,

and each constituency electing eight Senators by the single transferable vote. The votes cast are not published, but it will be noticed that the seats won are in close proportion to the votes cast in the Assembly election.

Province	Government		Opposition	
	Nationalist	Others	United Party	Labour
Cape	3	—	4	1
Natal	—	1	6	1
Transvaal	3	—	4	1
Orange Free State ...	5	2	1	—
	<u>11</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>3</u>
	14		18	

This was not the final composition of the Senate, for we have to add four representatives of the Bantus—all of course in opposition—and eight Senators nominated by the Prime Minister, who are naturally on the Government side. This gives a tie.

This tie in the Senate and a small majority in the Assembly were clearly unwelcome to the Nationalist leaders and there was for some time talk of a new election. Especially, the Nationalists wished to rid themselves of dependence on the support of their ally the Afrikaner Party, which is less eager than the Nationalists to reduce the non-Europeans' political rights. The Provincial elections in March, 1949, however, gave very much the same result as the Parliamentary election; it was apparent that the electors were not rushing to support the new Government and no landslide in its favour could be expected with any confidence; Malan was therefore constrained to make the best of the position.

The Government has thus had to show some moderation; it has not been able to force through, wholesale, measures which (whatever their intrinsic merits) have not been endorsed by a majority of the voters, let alone by those who have no votes. Once more, a small majority gives better prospects for the stability of the country than would a large one for the same government—but how much better it would be if that small majority corresponded to the expressed wishes of the voters!

U.S.A.

The American Presidential election of November, 1948, brought to notice in a striking way another aspect of the tendency of majority systems to produce instability, namely the violent changes that can be brought about by a change of opinion on the part of a very few voters.

The fact everyone knows is that the Gallup Poll (along with almost every other forecast) predicted a majority for Mr. Dewey, while actually President Truman was returned with a majority both of electoral college seats and of popular votes. What is generally ignored is the fact that the difference between the Gallup Poll and the actual votes cast is quite small—only some 5 per cent. It may well indicate not an error at all but a real change of opinion between the time the Gallup Poll was taken and the actual election about two weeks later. But, however that may be, what particularly interests us is that only one person in twenty changing sides can reverse the entire government of half a continent.

This exaggerated effect of a few votes is in part due to the arrangement which gives New York, for example, 47 electoral college seats, all of which go to the party polling the largest number of votes in that State. (We note with interest that there is a movement in America to replace this by a division of the seats on a proportional basis.) This obvious injustice is, however, in no way different in principle from the British system. Here also the largest party in any constituency takes the whole of the representation—which may be one M.P. or nine Borough Councillors. In Worcester in 1945, if only three people had been persuaded to vote Labour instead of Conservative, that Borough, with its 41,523 electors, would have appeared in Parliament on the Government side instead of in opposition; in the Balham Ward of Wandsworth the same year, if 535 people out of some 14,000 voters had changed their minds, all the nine Labour Councillors then elected would have been replaced by nine Conservatives. Under P.R. the larger party would have had five of those Councillors and the smaller four; the slight change of opinion would have affected only one of the nine seats.

HOLLAND

An election in July, 1948, arose out of the need for a two-thirds ratification by a new Parliament of certain constitutional amendments, especially one concerned with Indonesia. Two parties which were critical of this (Christian Historical Party and Party of Freedom) increased their strength, but there was no marked change. As in other countries, there was a decline in Communist strength. The figures were as follows :—

Party				Votes	Seats
Catholic People's	...	...	...	1,531,326 = 31.0%	32
Labour	...	...	...	1,263,366 = 25.6%	27
Anti-Revolutionary...	...	...	...	651,717 = 13.2%	13
Christian Historical...	...	...	...	453,211 = 9.2%	9
Party of Freedom	...	...	...	391,982 = 7.9%	8
Communist	...	...	...	381,953 = 7.7%	8
Political Reform	...	...	...	117,142 = 2.4%	2
Catholic Action	...	...	...	62,337 = 1.3%	1
Smallholders'	...	...	...	40,936 = 0.9%	0
Independent Nationalists	...	...	...	22,197 = 0.5%	0
World Government	...	...	...	15,344 = 0.3%	0
Revolutionary Communist...	...	...	...	2,224 = 0.1%	0
				<u>4,933,735</u>	<u>100</u>

It will be noted that, although a number of small groups find it worth while to submit their opinions to the test of the polls, the number of parties having any considerable influence is quite small.

SWEDEN

The Swedish election in September, 1948, is interesting as an example of that much rarer occurrence, a really large change in public opinion over a period of four years. The Liberals, who held the fourth place in the previous Parliament, nearly doubled their vote and rather more than doubled their seats, becoming the second largest party. There was an equally spectacular fall in the Communist poll, and a somewhat smaller one in the Conservative.

	Votes	Gain or loss	Seats	Gain or loss
Social Democratic	1,749,672 = 46.5%	— 3.4%	112 = 48.7%	— 3
Liberal	846,336 = 22.5%	+ 9.5%	57 = 24.8%	+ 31
Agrarian	474,075 = 12.6%	— 1.1%	30 = 13.0%	— 5
Conservative	448,308 = 11.8%	— 4.2%	23 = 10.0%	— 16
Communist	241,178 = 6.6%	— 3.8%	8 = 3.5%	— 6
	<u>3,759,569</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>230</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

As the Social Democrats (who previously held exactly half the seats) had no clear majority, there was some speculation on what sort of government would be formed. In fact, there was no change : the Agrarians declined to enter a Coalition and the Social Democrats continued in power as a minority government, relying on support from the other parties, usually the Communists.

FINLAND

In our Annual Report for 1945 we referred to the pleased astonishment of the British press that Finland should have had free and fair elections carried out in an atmosphere of complete peace. A year later, few would have dared to prophesy that in 1949 we should still be able to quote Finland as an example of stable democratic government. Yet that country whose independence seemed so gravely threatened after the war is still free, and some of the credit must go to the fair system under which its Parliament is elected—a highly complicated development of the list system in fifteen constituencies, which gives the voter almost as much freedom as does the single transferable vote.

Our members are recommended to read an article on " Finland since the Armistice ", by J. Hampden Jackson, in *International Affairs* of October, 1948—from which the quotations which follow are taken.

" The most formidable problem of all was not that set by the campaign against the Germans or by the territorial losses or even by the reparations. It was the political problem. Finland had to have a Government that would be friendly to the Soviet Union—a Government which would not only be friendly but which would seem in Soviet eyes to be so. How could a people like the Finns who were essentially democratic in the Western sense and whose distrust of Russia had been increased by aggressions from the East repeated over seven hundred years ever bring themselves to support such a Government ? The solution of this problem would call for a patience, a degree of tact, a mixture of solidarity and subtlety on the part of the Finns which would be an unparalleled test of democratic character."

To that test the Finns responded well. "The elections of March, 1945 were the first to be held in any defeated country after the war. Except in so far as a few of the War Cabinet leaders were forbidden to stand as candidates, and that no criticism of the Soviet Union was permissible, they were fair and free. All the traditional Finnish political parties entered the lists and the need for a pro-Russian party was met by the formation of a new group, the Finnish People's Democratic League, (S.K.D.L.). This was a new guise for the Finnish Communists, strengthened by fellow-travellers and splinter groups of the left. It had a great success in winning the play-for-safety-with-Russia vote. Of the 200 seats in the Finnish Parliament, the S.K.D.L. won 49. Another 49 went to the Agrarians, or farmers' party. The Social Democrats, who have always been the strongest political party in Finland, won 50. An agreement was made between these three incongruous parties to support a Coalition Government, in which the Prime Ministership would go to an S.K.D.L. fellow-traveller, M. Pekkala, and the key position of Minister of the Interior to an out-and-out Communist, M. Leino. Thus Russia was placated and the security of Finnish democracy to some extent secured, for the President and most of the Cabinet Ministers were non-Communists, and 74 per cent. of the M.P.s were wary of, though not in open opposition to, the S.K.D.L."

Any of our opponents would say that such a balance of three parties could only be disastrous. Yet the country met appalling economic difficulties in admirable unity—for example everyone from the Prime Minister downwards accepted refugees as lodgers up to a ration of one room per person—and the Coalition proved both stable and strong. There was indeed one occasion when the Government resigned, the Agrarian Party having withdrawn because it objected to a grant of higher wages to transport workers, but again the impossibility of escaping from the party balance decreed by the voters forced the parties to make the best of the position, and the Government resumed office. It proved strong enough both to carry on very delicate negotiations with the U.S.S.R. and to deal firmly with a crisis arising from alleged irregularities in the conduct of its Communist Minister of the Interior, M. Leino. He, having refused to resign, was dismissed; Communist strikes and demonstrations failed dismally, and the Government, having made sure by Cabinet changes that a Communist Minister would no longer be responsible for the polling arrangements, announced a general election.

" The election of July 1 and 2, 1948, took place in an atmosphere of complete calm. An unusually high percentage of the electorate went to the polls. The results were almost exactly as had been expected. The S.K.D.L. lost a quarter of their seats : with only 38 out of 200 seats in Parliament, they were now the third party in Parliamentary strength—and only 33 of their seats were held by Communists. The Agrarians with 56 seats were now the first, and the Social Democrats with 55 seats were the second. Next on the list were the Conservatives, who had most reason to be pleased with the election because their gains were proportionately greater than those of any other party : they won 32 seats, a gain of 4 since 1945. The Swedish People's Party lost slightly (14 compared with 15 in 1945) and the Liberals lost heavily (5 compared with 9)."

The figures given by the Finnish Legation are as follows (it will be noticed that there is a discrepancy of one seat as compared with Mr. Hampden Jackson's figures) :—

	Votes	Seats obtained	Seats in proportion to votes
S.K.D.L.	371,669	38	40
Agrarian Party	446,198	56	48
Social Democrats	486,141	54	53
Conservatives	306,012	33	33
Swedish People's Party	144,198	14	16
Liberals	71,634	5	8
Independents	22,438	0	2
	<u>1,848,734</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>200</u>

(The advantage of the Agrarian Party over its strictly proportional number of seats is probably accounted for by the rural constituencies returning more members in proportion to their electorate than do the towns).

" These results left a difficult problem in Cabinet making. The obvious solution would have been a left-centre coalition of Agrarians and Social-Democrats, with or without the adherence of one or both of the smallest parties. But this would have meant leaving the S.K.D.L. in opposition, a position which might have been intolerable to its Russian sponsors. It was desirable to find places for the Communists and their fellow-travellers in the Cabinet, and the only questions were, which places and how many?

"The President called on M. Fagerholm, the Social Democrat who had been President (Speaker) of the last Parliament to form a Ministry, urging that it should consist, like the retiring Ministry, of the three main parties. M. Fagerholm accordingly offered the S.K.D.L. five of the sixteen portfolios in his Cabinet, but the S.K.D.L. refused: five seats were not enough. In the end M. Fagerholm had to fall back on a minority Cabinet consisting of eight Social Democrats and eight non-party men. It was not a satisfactory solution: the new Government could count with certainty only on the 55 votes of the Social Democrats in Parliament."

But it can count on other support so long as it pursues a policy acceptable not only to Social Democrats but to a majority of the nation, and up to the time of writing it has done so with complete success. As in Denmark, the fact that the Government has no clear majority to guarantee that it can do as it pleases has proved no obstacle to good government but rather the reverse.

"At any moment, as the Finns well know, the Russians may apply economic or military pressure which there can be no possibility of resisting. At any moment the tale of Finnish liberty may be ended. But meanwhile the Finns are free, and there seems no doubt that by their pertinacity and their patience, their courage and their calm in the hard years since the Armistice, and not least in the early months of 1948, they have done much to deserve that freedom. It is no accident that Finland is the only surviving democracy in the Russian sphere of influence."

The past year's experience, therefore, confirms our contention that countries using proportional systems tend to be more stable and united than others. It confirms the liability of our majority system to produce violent and unpredicted changes, discontented minorities, and even a discontented majority, subjected to the rule of a party having less support among those voting. Moreover, it confirms our view that the alleged advantage of a majority system—that it produces "strong" governments in the sense of governments in which one party has power to rule as it pleases—is not an advantage at all. On the whole the governed (for whose benefit the government exists) are better satisfied where that is

not the position ; that is, they prefer that those in power should be obliged to take account of other parties' wishes and that there should be an Opposition strong enough to act as an effective check upon any Government attempting to act tyrannously or unwisely. Mr. Herbert Morrison, speaking in Paris on British methods of government, referred to the need for an effective opposition, but he does nothing to ensure that we have one—on the contrary, he is very much concerned to maintain the party discipline that secures to the Government a Parliamentary majority against which the Opposition is helpless. As the *News Chronicle* said when commenting on a proposal to exclude Communists from employment in a certain firm, " Each of us is a member of some minority or other, either Plymouth Brethren or bi-metallists, Welsh Nationalists or red-heads, and we are all entitled to protection from that great amalgamation of all the other minorities which makes up the majority." The existence of such protection makes for progress, which may indeed be slower than some wish but is much more firmly based, much less likely to be destroyed by a " swing of the pendulum."

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Various other countries have provided items of news interesting to our members.

AUSTRALIA

We rejoice in a victory for P.R. in Australia. We fear that the Government's conversion was due less to a sense of justice than to fear of losing all the Senatorial seats to be contested in 1949, but at any rate we have finished with the alternative vote in Senate elections, whose grotesque results we have so often quoted. In the next election of Senators, Australians will use proportional representation by the single transferable vote.

In connection with this introduction of P.R., our friends in Australia have endeavoured to get altered two practices to which they have always strongly objected but which operated for many years under the alternative vote—the arrangement of the candidates' names according to party instead of alphabetically, and the requirement that the voter shall mark a preference for every candidate. Unfortunately, both practices are to be retained. While we do not

agree that their continuance will be disastrous, we regret the non-success of our friends' efforts. Both practices we feel are undesirable—especially that of requiring the voter to mark every candidate. Besides being quite unnecessary (a large proportion of the later preferences will never be used) this seems an unwarrantable interference with the elector's right to refuse any degree of support to a candidate he dislikes, and it will certainly lead to a continuance of an excessively high proportion of invalid papers. Friends of P.R. in Australia will, we know, be very active in making clear to the public that any excessive number of invalid papers is due simply to this requirement and not to any difficulty in the P.R. method itself.

While not favouring the arrangement of candidates' names according to party, we do not share the fear that it will make it impossible for small parties or Independents to challenge successfully the monopoly of the two main parties. At the time of writing it is not known for certain whether this challenge will be made at the forthcoming election, but we hope it will be.

It is a great pity that reform of the Australian electoral system has not yet been extended to the House of Representatives. It is to be hoped that the higher quality of Senators and the more co-operative spirit which are to be expected as results of P.R. will induce future Australian governments to extend fair voting to all elections.

CANADA

Canada has had a spate of Provincial elections (with a Dominion general election to come by the time members receive this report), all of which have been first-class examples of the unfairness of a majority system.

Ontario showed anomalies of two kinds. The Conservatives remained in power, with a reduced majority, but their Prime Minister was defeated. The C.C.F. (Labour Party) became the second largest party in the House—and therefore the official Opposition—although it polled fewer votes than the Liberals. In the Toronto area there was a landslide, the C.C.F., who previously had no seats there, winning 11 seats to the Conservatives' 6 although they polled only 37 per cent. of the votes there against the Conservatives' 40 per cent.

For **Quebec** there are a few gaps and inaccuracies in the published figures, but the following totals are substantially correct :—

		Union Nationale	Liberal	Union des Electeurs	Others
Votes	... ..	636,545	454,937	113,258	45,125
Seats	... ..	82	8	0	2

Fourteen Union Nationale candidates, one Liberal, one Independent and one Nationalist were elected on minority votes, but clearly this is not sufficient to account for the gross over-representation of the largest party.

Still less can it account for the **Alberta** result, for in that Province election by a minority is prevented by the use of the alternative vote. The result was as follows :—

Country constituencies (alternative vote) :

		Social Credit	C.C.F.	Liberal	Others
Votes	... ..	122,665	43,127	39,046	6,891
Seats	... ..	46	0	0	1

Calgary and Edmonton (P.R.) :

		Social Credit	C.C.F.	Liberal	Others
Votes	... ..	25,147	13,260	16,695	13,769
Seats	... ..	5	2	2	1

This is the worst, so far, of the series of grotesque results produced by the alternative vote in Alberta : Social Credit, with 58 per cent. of the votes cast, has entirely excluded its opponents in the country constituencies from all share in the government of the Province. For the one successful candidate listed under "Others" is in fact "Independent Social Credit"! The result would have been exactly the same if the British first-past-the-post system had been used, for a second count was necessary in only eight constituencies and in each of these the candidate leading on the first count was elected.

The superiority of the Calgary and Edmonton results (which supply the only Opposition) is obvious, and we hope it will soon become so to the people of Alberta. Whatever may be the difficulties which constituencies returning three or more members may involve in the sparsely-populated districts, they cannot be serious enough to justify the continuance of this farcical system.

MALTA

We are fortunate in having a correspondent who gives us detailed information about Maltese elections—information which otherwise would probably never reach us. A curious difficulty arose there in filling a casual vacancy. In Malta, as in Tasmania, casual vacancies are filled, not by a new election, but by the re-examination of the original ballot papers of the late member. This is the best method of preserving fair representation in that constituency, but of course it cannot allow for any change of circumstances since the general election. A member of the Jones Party, Mr. Camilleri, died, and the re-count of his supporters' papers gave the seat, as would be expected, to another of the Jones Party's general election candidates, Mr. Cauchi. He had been nominated as required for the casual vacancy, but now as a Labour Party candidate, and his election led to considerable press discussion, his return as a Labour member on preferences originally given to the Jones Party being felt to be not quite right.

It should, of course, be noted that the position is no worse than it would have been if Mr. Cauchi had been returned at the general election and had then changed his party—instances of this kind have occurred in Britain and we have no remedy. The matter raises the whole question of whether the electors should have the power of recall. It might be thought worth while, in future casual vacancies, to guard against circumstances such as arose in this election of Mr. Cauchi; this might be done by requiring that the new nomination paper needed for each of the general election candidates who were willing to stand again should be signed by, say, at least three-quarters of the original nominators. If the candidate changed his party and the nominators did not, they would refuse their consent; if, on the other hand, the nominators followed the candidate in his conversion, it would seem probable that most of his other supporters would do so too, and would therefore be quite content to have their votes used for that candidate.

ISRAEL

A new State has come into being during the year and has held its first election (for a Constituent Assembly), and we are happy to record a satisfactory outcome. Among the arguments used against recognition of the State of Israel was the allegation that it was

dominated by Communists; the election has disproved this, for extremists of all kinds fared very badly, as the following figures show :—

Party	Votes	Seats
Mapai (Ben Guiron)	155,274	46
Mapam (Left-wing Labour)	64,018	19
United Religious	52,982	16
Herut (Right)	49,782	14
General Zionists	22,661	7
Progressives	17,786	5
Sephardim	15,287	4
Communists	15,148	4
Nazareth Democrats	7,387	2
LHY	5,363	1
Wizo	5,173	1
Yemenites	4,399	1
Arab Workers	3,214	0
Revisionists	2,892	0
Orthodox	2,835	0
Arab Popular Bloc	2,812	0
Orthodox Women	2,796	0
Gruenbaum	2,514	0
Religious Workers	1,280	0
Pro-Jerusalem	842	0
Agudists	230	0
	<u>434,684</u>	<u>120</u>

A total of 440,095 people went to the poll, and there were 5,411 invalid votes (1.25 per cent.). Of the elected members, one in six is a farmer by profession and one in ten is a woman.

The great bulk of public opinion supported the moderate parties and Ben Gurion's provisional government, and we may hope that moderation will prevail in the difficult situation which still exists in that part of the world. It is a good sign that the provisional government of Israel—now confirmed in power—was ready to accord justice to all its minorities by the use of a fair voting system. The method used was party list P.R. applied to the whole country as one constituency. Though this was probably a good way of dealing with this first election, it can hardly give satisfaction as a permanent institution—it is more impersonal even than the French method, for when a party list has to cover 120 seats it is clearly impracticable even to state the names of all the candidates on the

ballot paper, let alone to give the voters a choice among them. We believe that a more personal system will be demanded, and we hope it will be the single transferable vote. We are encouraged in this hope by individual enquiries we have had since that election.

THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES

By-Election Campaigns

During the past year we have been able to utilise parliamentary by-elections in Central Southwark, Glasgow (Gorbals), Stirling and Falkirk, Edmonton, Batley and Morley, South Hammersmith, and North St. Pancras for campaigns to secure publicity for the single transferable vote and P.R. amongst all sections of the community. In each case the distribution of our localised leaflets and our poster displays attracted much attention.

In *Southwark* every house received our leaflet. The poster display gave rise to many favourable comments. For several weeks after polling day some of our posters remained on show at a very advantageous display point.

In *Gorbals* working conditions and the weather combined to make this a severe test, but the effort was well worth while. The electors' interest was made very plain at a Labour meeting when the candidate, unable to answer a question on P.R., turned to our old opponent at East Edinburgh, who was also on the platform. His peremptory dismissal of the question caused a storm of protests, and the audience renewed those protests when a supplementary question was ignored.

At *Batley and Morley* there was marked interest, and both candidates discoursed on P.R. at some length. Through the good offices of one of our local members, our Assistant Secretary, Mr. A. H. Sumption, was able to give an afternoon address to the senior boys and girls of the Batley Grammar Schools. At question time the masters were well to the fore, and most of the pros and cons came under review. For the boys this discussion had an added interest, as their school elections were to take place within the next few days.

In *South Hammersmith* the question of P.R. was put to a Labour M.P. engaged on a street tour with a loudspeaker van. He discussed the matter quite favourably, and finally admitted that he was in favour of this reform.

In *St. Pancras (North)* one of our local members assisted splendidly with the leaflet distribution. The Labour candidate ignored a letter we sent him; the Communist candidate replied in the affirmative, the Conservative in the negative.

These campaigns have certainly attracted considerable attention to P.R., and the candidates of the two major parties, in the light of the reactions of their audiences and the local press, are finding that the old stock replies "Effective government requires that one Party must have power" and "Look at France" are no longer satisfactory. These candidates now tend to take the line of admitting that P.R. is obviously fairer but "We do not think it will work in this country." The Society needs to follow up this change to the defensive by a vigorous campaign in every constituency, in preparation for the general election in 1950.

Local Government Elections

We are pleased to report that a number of members responded to our request that good use should be made of the opportunities for letters to the local and national press, and approaches to candidates, afforded by the elections in London and throughout the country of the County Councils and other local government bodies in April and May 1949. For these activities we issued four special leaflets (two dealing with London, where both County and Borough elections are triennial; two for the provinces and Scotland, where County Councils are elected triennially, but annual election of one-third of the Borough and District Councillors is the practice).

In connection with the Borough and District Council elections cases of objection to Party discipline, leading to letters and reports in the press containing bitter recriminations and to "splitting the vote" candidatures, gave openings of which the office took advantage to point to the usefulness in such circumstances, to both Party and public, of the single transferable vote, as it would give the electors the opportunity to decide—as, democratically they

alone should—between individual and Party claims with both justice and regard to the interests of good government. The *Councillor or Robot?* page of the leaflet for the May elections aroused interest and comment generally, and particularly so in areas where these disciplinary difficulties were before the public.

With the growing intrusion of Party politics into all local elections, these contests and results are receiving greater attention in public discussions, and we are grateful to all those members who sent us press reports for record and publicity purposes.

University of London

In the University of London, *Convocation* elects annually one-third of its Standing Committee, using the block vote. These elections have from time to time given rise to some dissatisfaction, and this came to a head in January, 1949, when for the first time the election was contested openly on party lines. The Conservatives, alleging a Socialist monopoly of the committee, nominated for the fifteen seats eight candidates, six of whom were elected. Although they failed to sweep the board (owing to a strong element of personal and Faculty voting cutting across the party ticket), the result was sufficient to cause fears that Party might become the dominant factor in University elections. The Conservative victory involved the defeat of some very prominent committee members, not all of whom were Socialists.

Soon afterwards, the warning was underlined by an occurrence in the *London School of Economics*. A joker nominated an imaginary candidate for one of the six vacancies on the student council, and secured a place for him on the college Labour Club's ticket. The result was typical of the block vote—all six Labour nominees were elected, including the man who did not exist! (He was fifth in order.) This throws new light on Mr. Herbert Morrison's remark that in certain constituencies "however unsuitable a candidate, if he has a Labour ticket he is bound to win."

Miss Lakeman tabled a motion for the following meeting of Convocation "That this House request the Standing Committee to examine the system under which Convocation elections are conducted, and to make recommendations with a view to preventing

any group from monopolising representation on the Standing Committee," and carried it by 68 votes to 8. She has worked out and submitted to Standing Committee (of which she is a member) the application of the single transferable vote to the particular circumstances of these elections. It was an interesting problem, for, while every graduate present at the Convocation meeting is entitled to vote for candidates in all Faculties, a specified number of members has to be elected from each Faculty. This apparent difficulty is, however, easily got over by introducing a rule that (a) when the requisite number of seats in any Faculty has been filled, any remaining candidates in that Faculty shall be declared defeated and their votes shall be transferred, and (b) when the elimination of any candidate would reduce the number of candidates in his Faculty below the required number, that candidate shall be declared elected and shall be treated for the rest of the count as a continuing candidate. This is in fact the same solution as that applied to similar circumstances in the election of the Senate in Eire.

The Standing Committee has met once since Miss Lakeman's resolution was passed, and the present position is that the Committee is to have a special meeting to consider the whole structure of the University committees and the methods by which they are elected.

Germany

On the announcement that a date had been fixed for a meeting of representatives of the various Laender in the American, British and French Zones for the preparation of a federal constitution for Western Germany, a memorandum was sent to the Prime Ministers of each of the eleven Landtage concerned. Some of the Prime Ministers and representatives of the Social Democratic Party in acknowledging this document referred to its "containing material which would be of use in preparing electoral laws for other representative bodies." The members of the Constituent Assembly (or Parliamentary Council as it was called later), owing to shortness of time, were chosen by each Landtag, party representation being based on the *votes* secured by each party at the election of the respective Landtag.

The Western Germany constitution as finally adopted provides for the Lower Chamber of the new Federal Parliament to be elected

by a mixed method much on the lines of that used for the local and state council elections in the British Zone in 1946 and 1947. In brief, a specified number of members are to be directly elected in single-member constituencies, by first-past-the-post majority, with additional seats allocated to the various parties from reserved lists of members in proportion to the total votes secured in the direct elections by each party. As our two previous annual reports have shewn, this mixed method cannot do more than ameliorate discrepancies between votes secured and seats won, particularly with four or more parties nominating candidates.

We had a pleasing enquiry from Muenchen-Solln, from a former prisoner of war whom our Secretaries met when visiting Wilton Park Camp in 1947, for "material shewing the deficiencies of the present electoral system in England" to be used in discussions and articles in the press on the Bavarian electoral law, in which he proposed to urge adoption of the single transferable vote form of P.R. From other correspondence with Germany it is evident that considerable discussion is proceeding in various quarters on methods of voting.

During the year Miss Lakeman has met a number of the groups of German politicians visiting this country under arrangements made by the British Government. On all these occasions the visitors, irrespective of party, have spontaneously asked many questions about the British voting system, and have been much impressed by the superiority of the S.T.V. These visitors have been astonished to discover that the British single-member system is not, as they had supposed, a personal system but in practice operates as a Party List system in which each list is limited to one name.

British Citizens and their M.P's.

That party connection exerts a far greater influence in each constituency than does the candidate's personality has been brought out in two enquiries during the year by the British Institute of Public Opinion. In the first, citizens were asked to give the name of the M.P. representing their constituency; it was found that 33 per cent. were unable to reply correctly. In view of this, Miss Lakeman suggested to the *News Chronicle*, which published the figures, the

desirability of taking a further poll, to discover how many citizens knew the party of their M.P. The paper acted on this suggestion, when it was found that over the same groups only 20 per cent. were unable to answer correctly. When four persons out of five can correctly state the Party of their M.P. but only two out of three are able to give the Member's name, it is evident that our single-member system has ceased to be one of election on personal grounds.

New Applications of the Single Transferable Vote :

Every year sees some new applications of the method of voting advocated by this Society. Of those during the past year we mention two.

The *Amalgamated Society of Lithographic Printers* amended its rules to provide that the transferable vote be used for all its ballots : our first intimation of this came from an enquiry after the amendment had been adopted.

The *Zionist Federation of Great Britain & Ireland*, which has hitherto used the block vote, in 1949, after considerable discussion, experimented with the single transferable vote in the election of its Vice-Presidents and Executive Council members. Four panels, two of five members, one of fifteen, and another of twenty, had to be elected. The time available for the counting of these votes was very limited, but all the results were ready within the time stipulated, and we gather have given general satisfaction in respect of their representative character.

Merseyside Branch

Arising from contacts made during the Edge Hill by-election, Mr. F. A. Robinson, of Birkenhead, has kindly undertaken to act for the Society as Secretary of a Merseyside Branch, continuing the very useful work of Mr. R. G. Morton in this area. During the year Mr. Robinson has addressed meetings at boys' grammar schools and public gatherings at St. Helens and Ellesmere Port, the latter including a model election. He acted as returning officer in counting the votes for three elections in which P.R. was used for committees of the North West organisation of the Liberal Party. We are much indebted to Mr. Robinson for the work he is doing, and wish him success in all his efforts.

Publications :

In addition to the leaflets for the parliamentary by-elections and the local government elections, there has been issued during the year P.R. Leaflet No. 40, *Fair Voting—Is it Dangerous?* In four pages this deals briefly with the more frequently raised objections to P.R.

Our Research Secretary, Miss Lakeman, has had a number of articles published, of which the following have been reprinted and are available in leaflet form :

No Split Vote (The South African Assembly Election, 1948). (*Liberal News*, 16/7/48.)

Such Elections are Dangerous (South Africa's Assembly and Senate Elections, 1948). (*Liberal Magazine*, August, 1948.)

Methods of Voting (8 pages). (*Parliamentary Affairs*, Autumn, 1948.)

Dr. J. F. S. Ross is to be congratulated upon the publication during the year of a new edition of *Parliamentary Representation*—* revised and enlarged to include a very thorough analysis of the 1945 General Election results, a memorandum Dr. Ross submitted to the 1944 Speaker's Conference, and a study of the reports of that Conference. This new edition received excellent press reviews : it can be warmly recommended to all our members, and should be made available in every public library.

Another new book, of which Mr. R. S. W. Pollard, a member of the Society's Executive Committee, is one of the three joint authors, *Democracy and the Quaker Method*,† contains much which will be of interest to our members, and discusses in a very striking way the procedures by which decisions in large and small groups are arrived at. It comments "Procedure is a more significant matter than at first sight may appear." That brings to mind a piece of John H. Humphreys' *obiter dicta*, "P.R. is not only a method of election, it embodies a political philosophy ; that justice in human relationships, and this is what it stands for, produces the atmosphere most conducive to peace."

* *Parliamentary Representation*—Eyre & Spottiswoode Ltd., 15s. net.

† *Democracy and the Quaker Method*—Bannisdale Press, 8s. 6d. net.

The magazine *Humphreys*, launched by Mr. Michael Birkin in 1947, has continued, by articles and advertisements, to afford valuable publicity to our cause. By subscribing to this interesting monthly review of parliamentary and local government, members can do much to extend its influence and ensure its continuance.

The Society's publications reach unexpected places. The Gorbals (Glasgow) by-election leaflet brought an enquiry from Stroud, Glos., as "similar figures for Gloucestershire would be very useful." Our last annual report, *The Will of ALL the People*, found its way to Japan, and as a result the British Central Office of Information received a request from Tokio for permission to publish a somewhat abridged edition in Japanese, a translation which would circulate widely through University and other channels. Permission was readily given.

Model Parliaments :

Another effective method of reaching the electors, and securing some lively discussion of P.R., is the introduction of a Bill or a motion in one of the Model Parliaments which are springing up again after their general closure on the outbreak of war in 1939. We have helped in a number of cases with the Bill or motion, which in most instances has been carried, and have secured useful reports in the local press.

JOHN H. HUMPHREYS MEMORIAL

Including further donations made during the year, the total received for this Fund to the end of 1948 is £552.

We were anticipating that we should have been able to have reported publication of the memorial volume (a new edition of John H. Humphreys' *Proportional Representation* published in 1911), but Mr. John D. Lambert has acquired such an immense amount of material on elections held in 1945 and after that he is finding the task of revision more difficult than at first appeared would be the case. He is concentrating on the post-1918 and post-1945 periods, retaining Mr. Humphreys' original statement of the gospel of P.R.—which he says "I do not think can be bettered." We hope it will be possible to have the memorial volume available for members in the course of the next few months.

THE ARTHUR McDUGALL FUND

As the statement of accounts shows, this Fund, under a trust deed of the 6th October, 1948, has been established as a charitable trust for research and educational work. With the trust deed now in its final form, it is hoped that the discussions in regard to the exemption of the trust from liability to income tax will be successfully concluded.

FINANCE

A copy of the audited Statement of Accounts for 1948 has been sent to every member of the Society. Messrs. Minton, Robertson & Co., Chartered Accountants, have audited the accounts for the ninth year in succession. The Committee express their warm thanks for this very valuable help.

The 1948 subscriptions, at £1,173, were £35 more than in 1947. The fees for services rendered on elections for trade union and other bodies amounted to £1,315—the staff had an exceptionally busy year in this respect. With expenditure totalling £2,798 there was a deficit on the year of £257, which has been met by drawing on our Legacy and Reserve Fund. As the Accounts show, the increase of £395 in the expenditure arises mainly on pamphlets and leaflets (£114) and advertising (£180).

Our *Legacy and Reserve Fund* benefited during the year by a bequest of £450 received from an old member, Mr. Harold S. Moorhouse. This Fund, from which has been met the difference when the normal income in any year has not been sufficient to meet the ordinary expenditure, has been of very great value to the Society. The Committee is much indebted to those members who made the establishment and continuance of this Fund possible; others may feel moved to make some provision in their wills for maintaining and strengthening it.

The increase in subscriptions for the second year in succession is an encouraging indication of growing interest in electoral reform, but there are many directions in which the Committee could with advantage extend the activities of the Society if further finance were available. The calls on the Society for information and advice from all quarters and from many parts of the world continue unabated. We would therefore renew our appeal for a substantial

increase both in new members and in revenue from subscriptions, with a view to extending the Society's efforts to make the need for reform of the method of voting a live issue at all local elections and in every constituency at the general election in 1950.

Obituary

Ernest A. Aston

The Society would pay a very warm tribute to the memory of one of the very early Irish advocates of electoral reform, Ernest A. Aston. A man of splendid and restless imagination, his real love, however, was for P.R., and all the press comments on his life and work make special reference to the great part he played in securing the introduction of P.R. into Ireland, for the election of a new town council for Sligo, in 1919. But, as one of the newspapers remarked, "He would be the first to insist that John H. Humphreys should be given the credit for that." Mr. Aston was for some years secretary of the P.R. Society of Ireland, and it is indicative of the high regard each had for the other that, on hearing of the passing of our late secretary, Mr. Aston should write "John Humphreys did more than any other man to put this State (Eire) on sure democratic foundations." Mr. Aston was a great pioneer in many fields, and had the satisfaction, as with P.R., of seeing Eire advance as the result of the coming to fruition of the many enterprises for whose initiation he was responsible. He enjoyed the esteem of a wide circle of friends, on both sides of the Irish border.

James Corbyn

In advising us of the passing of his old friend Mr. James Corbyn, who was 87, a fellow-member, whom Mr. Corbyn had been instrumental in attracting to the support of our cause and as assistant in some of his local activities, paid a very high tribute to Mr. Corbyn's unflagging zeal in advocating P.R. and inventing novel ways of drawing attention to its claims. Almost up to the time of his decease and notwithstanding some physical disabilities, for over twenty-five years Mr. Corbyn had persistently and persuasively been busy for P.R., preparing, printing and circulating leaflets of his own, speaking, and writing to the press of Surrey and Hampshire.

A man of wide, liberal sympathies, he kept in touch with friends in many parts, and did much individual spadework for our cause. From time to time he would report progress to the office, and we shall miss his cheery words of appreciation and encouragement.

The Committee also record with much regret the loss by death of the following members, many of them of very long connection :— F. M. Burris, J.P., Edward Cadbury, J.P., LL.D., Mrs. H. Capper, Miss E. Cunningham, Henrietta Lady Davies, Herbert Eva, E. B. Gosling, Dr. Arnold Gregory, A. T. Grindley, F. W. Harris, T. R. Kellner, Viscount Leverhulme, Miss E. Macadam, Hugh Martin, A. E. Molyneux, E. N. Parson, H. S. C. Rees, Rev. Leyton Richards, T. H. Shepley, C. W. Sorensen, Mrs. Mabel Symonds, David Thomas, J. A. Yonge.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

In these days there is evidence in every quarter of the ferment of ideas and a desire for the development of representative self-government. An announcement was made that elections were to be held in *Sudan*. We found it was proposed to have some 50 single-member constituencies, with three other constituencies to return four or five members by the block vote, and submitted a memorandum outlining the grounds upon which the use of P.R. would be more advisable. The ordinance having been already promulgated, however, it was too late to secure changes. During the elections, feelings ran high and there were some disturbances. It is not without significance that the Governor-General in opening the first meeting of the new Assembly expressed regret that one of the larger communities was seriously under-represented. From *Kenya*, as a result of a letter of Miss Lakeman's in the London *Economist*, came an enquiry as to means of ensuring a fair sharing of seats in view of difficulties arising from increasing tension between Hindu and Moslem members of the Indian community. From *Hong Kong*, with preparations in hand for the establishment of an elected Legislative Council, for which the electorate will probably consist of a large number of Chinese, with smaller bodies of European, local Portuguese, and Indian races, the Society received a request for early information in regard to P.R. In *India*, the new constitution for the Dominion (now to be the Republic) of India, provides that there shall be no separate electorates for religious communities, but

that some seats shall for the time being be reserved in certain constituencies for Moslems, the scheduled castes, most of the scheduled tribes, and in Madras and Bombay for Indian Christians. And the Minister of Education, to "find out why Moslem fights Hindu," has instituted an enquiry "into the causes and prevention of religious, racial, and other tensions." In all these cases, the Society has been able to demonstrate the deficiencies of the customary methods of election and to show, in the light of experience in Eire, Malta, and elsewhere, that there is every reason to anticipate that in these further fields P.R. with the single transferable vote would be equally effective in softening asperities between the races, and groups within those races, and in making possible that co-operation in which "by pursuing great enterprises together men find unity with each other, and in their unity discover the road to true freedom."

At home we are also not without indications of growing awareness that the uneven and uncertain manner in which our electoral system operates has some quite substantial disadvantages. The *Economist* has published articles to the effect that generally speaking the professional classes are dissatisfied with the two major parties and are doubtful of the Liberal Party resuming its place as an effective political force. The writer estimated that this middle group numbers about two million electors and suggested it should organise its voting power, not to elect its own candidates but to bargain with the existing parties, and should create an Independent Voters' Alliance. The Trades Union Congress, greatly concerned at the success of Communists in securing election to branch and other official positions in numbers out of all proportion to their real support amongst the membership of the respective Unions, has taken steps to call attention to this, and the efforts to "adjust the balance" have occasioned much internal friction.

Here also steps have been taken to direct attention to the fact that these difficulties would be more effectively and satisfactorily dealt with if the electoral machinery instead of being the straight-jacket of the majority system (whether in single-member or block vote elections) were the single transferable vote, which alone has the flexibility essential if changes in opinion are to find the easy and ordered expression so important in these days of frequent and often surprising changes.

There is therefore need for considerable expansion of the work of the Society, and opportunity for all our members and supporters to bring to the notice of every organisation with which they may be brought into contact the advantages secured by extending the principle of justice in representation to majority and minority alike by means of P.R.

Appendix

[The Society welcomes this independent statement of opinion, without necessarily being committed to all the views expressed.]

NORTHERN IRELAND AND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

By Prof. A. J. ALLAWAY, M.A.

The defenders of the simple majority system of election to central legislatures claim as its greatest merit that it keeps the number of political parties down to a minimum, and compels each of these to work out in advance of elections opposing comprehensive policies for presentation to the electorate. This, it is maintained, makes for electoral simplicity, since the electors are not faced by a bewildering variety of parties with at most but partial policies; for public enlightenment, since the expositions of the rival comprehensive policies inform the electors on the great issues of the day; and for governmental efficiency, since the party returned to power is obliged to strive to carry its policy into effect in a capable manner, or be judged incompetent and be replaced by another at the next general election. The system is often defended as one which is universally valid, and also as one likely to bring everywhere the above-mentioned advantages. I would suggest that it was relevant only to one or two special cases, e.g., Great Britain in the nineteenth century, and is doubtfully relevant to any at the present time.

The political history of Northern Ireland since the adoption in 1929 of one-member constituencies and the simple majority system of election, shows that in one country at least this system, whilst reducing the number of effective political parties to two, does not necessarily produce the benefits claimed for it by its defenders, except, of course, the benefit of simplicity. Simplicity can at times, however, be purchased at too heavy a price, and Northern Ireland is a good example of this fact. From 1920, when Northern Ireland was created a political entity, until 1929, the elections were conducted according to the principles of Proportional Representation. The results gave the Unionist Party an absolute majority at each election, with the Nationalist Party

having the next largest number of seats, and the remainder being divided among Labour and Progressive and Independent Unionists. Though the smaller parties scarcely counted, the leaders of the Unionist Party foresaw the day when, together with the representatives of the Nationalist Party, these might return so many members as to outnumber the Unionist Party at Stormont. They determined, therefore, to abolish P.R., which, under the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, they were entitled to do any time after 1923. So P.R. was abolished in 1929.

The creation *de novo* of single-member constituencies is a work of art in which the official Unionists, as I shall call them, displayed considerable virtuosity. No one who looks at the electoral map of Northern Ireland with any degree of objectivity can escape the conclusion that the constituencies were drawn in a manner decidedly favourable to the Unionist Party. Under P.R., the shape of an electoral area is, of course, of little import, but under the simple majority system it can have a decisive effect upon elections. The adoption of the British electoral system at once sharply checked the growth of the Labour and unofficial Unionist and Nationalist parties, and has since reduced elections in Northern Ireland virtually to plebiscites on the question of the maintenance of the union of Northern Ireland with Great Britain. At roughly four-yearly intervals, the Eire (now Republic of Ireland) Government has kindly obliged the Ulster Unionist Party with a good excuse for holding a general election and appealing to the passionate belief of the Northern Ireland Protestant in the sacredness of the union, and thus the Party has been able to exploit that belief to its own advantage.

Northern Ireland is a country in which there is a sharp cleavage of opinion. The majority ardently desire to remain, as they now are, citizens of the United Kingdom; the minority, equally as ardently, desire that Northern Ireland should become incorporated in the Republic of Ireland. It is the proud boast of supporters of each side that they never change their opinions. Elections fought on this question of union with Great Britain thus arouse deep feelings wherever contests occur, but the result is always a foregone conclusion for the country as a whole, and in all but a few constituencies. Thus, because the results are never in doubt in most constituencies, the permanent minority party does not trouble to put up candidates. The Nationalist does not oppose the Unionist in official Unionist constituencies, and the official Unionist gives the Nationalist a walk-over in official Nationalist constituencies. The consequence has been a high proportion of uncontested seats and a growing apathy with regard to all political questions, except

those relating to the Border. The figures of uncontested seats for a House of Commons of fifty-two members are as follows :—

1921	nil	} Under P.R.
1925	8	
1929	22	} Under simple majority system
1933	33	
1938	21	
1945	20	
1949	20	

Northern Ireland is confronted by many serious economic and social problems. But neither the Unionist Party nor the Nationalist Party shows any very lively interest in these, or has any clearly stated policy for dealing with them. Yet, under a two-party system, we are told, each party is stimulated by the other to produce a comprehensive practical policy, and, in addition, the opposition is induced to keep the government up to scratch by constructive criticism of the legislative measures which it brings forward in Parliament. In Northern Ireland, the Unionist Party has no strong incentive to formulate any political policy. It is able to evade its responsibility as the Government Party by periodically waving the Union Jack, beating the drums and appealing to Orange sentiments, and by proclaiming that its policy (which is no policy at all) is "step by step with Great Britain," in the matter of social legislation. For the same reasons, the official Nationalist Party is relieved of its responsibility as an opposition. Since it can never hope to become the government, it is able to dispense with a broad general policy, and it is at the same time under a strong temptation to use Parliament chiefly as a sounding-board for Irish nationalism, a temptation into which it is constantly falling.

Since there is no clash of major political policies, since elections are merely plebiscites on the Border question, and since on average fifty per cent. of the seats are uncontested in general elections, the two-party system in Ulster does not educate the electorate in political questions. Thus, apart from its simplicity, this system does not confer upon the people of Northern Ireland any of the benefits which are supposedly intrinsic to it. It, in fact, fastens upon the country not merely a permanent Unionist Government, but a permanent Conservative government too. For though the Ulster Unionist party claims to be an umbrella party, giving protection to all interests, it is essentially a party representative of the interests of the more prosperous manufacturers, traders and farmers. Its "policy" of step by step with Great Britain is dictated less by any very obvious concern for the things which we in this country

count important, and more by a desire to make Ulster, as far as possible, a little Britain in Ireland. Thus we find social legislation almost identical with that of Great Britain being put on the statute book of Northern Ireland, with little or no enthusiasm, and being received by the Nationalist opposition with little or no enthusiasm either, since this party is representative of much the same economic and social interests as the Unionist party.

The opinions and interests which in Great Britain find expression in the left wing of the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the Labour Party, have no outlet in Northern Ireland. There are many men and women of progressive views on both sides of Northern Ireland's great divide who, because of the electoral arrangements now in operation, are alike condemned to impotence. They see many of the country's urgent economic and social needs neglected or inadequately met, but find little or no scope for doing anything really effective about it. If they try to found progressive parties, unionist, nationalist or border-neutral, they find that the votes their candidates poll, however considerable in the aggregate over the constituencies as a whole, are insufficient to return more than perhaps one or two members. This in time disheartens them, and, in due course, they descend into oblivion. Only the Labour Party has so far kept going for any length of time, but even so its representation at Stormont has been a mere two compared with the four of pre-1929 years. At the 1949 general election all Labour candidates were defeated, and there is now only one Independent Labour member (returned unopposed) at Stormont.

The elections since 1929 have given the following results :—

*Members, other than official Unionist or official Nationalist,
returned to the House of Commons.*

Party	1929 Election		1933 Election	
	Actual No. returned	No. according to votes cast	Actual No. returned	No. according to votes cast
Ind. U.*	2	4	2	3
Prog. U.	—	—	—	—
Labour	1	2	1	2
Liberal	—	2	—	—
Republican	—	—	2	1
Other	—	2	—	—
	3	10	5	6

Party	1938 Election		1949 Election	
	Actual No. returned	No. according to votes cast	Actual No. returned	No. according to votes cast
Ind. U.*	2	4	—	—
Prog. U.	—	3	—	—
Labour	—	1	—	4
Other	1	1	—	—
	—	—	—	—
	3	9	—	4
	—	—	—	—

*Includes non-party independents.

These figures do not, of course, represent the full support which independent candidates and parties other than official Unionist and official Nationalist have in the country, since there were so many unopposed returns in each of these elections, and so many straight fights between the two major parties. Allowing for these facts, it may be said with confidence that if these elections had been conducted according to the principles of P.R., the official Unionist majority would, in 1929 and 1938, have been of fairly modest proportions, and such as to put heart into the opposition parties, by opening up to them some prospect of their ultimately gaining a joint majority.

Where the people of Ulster stand on the question of the border is not in doubt, and is not likely to be for many years to come. What the country needs is government which puts this question behind it as at least provisionally settled, and directs its attention wholeheartedly to the economic and social problems of Northern Ireland. The restoration of P.R. is, in my opinion, the only means by which this need can be met. Under P.R., there might continue to be official Unionist Governments but, faced by a larger and more effective opposition, they would be obliged to produce concrete programmes for economic and social betterment, instead of the heady substitutes they now offer. In other words, P.R. would make for a responsible government and a responsible opposition, and in due course it might well lead Protestants and Catholics to unite on matters of common interest, whilst remaining divided on the border issue, instead of as at present being divided on every issue. As P.R. in the Republic of Ireland has been, in the words of Professor A. A. Luce, "a healing force in our midst," so might it have the same effect in Northern Ireland.

P.R. was abolished by a Northern Ireland Act of Parliament, and in present circumstances there is not the slightest hope that any suggestion to restore it would receive serious consideration

from the Government benches at Stormont. Since, however, the constitution of Northern Ireland is laid down by an Imperial Act of Parliament, i.e., the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, it is within the power of the Imperial Parliament to amend it, and to require the system of Proportional Representation to be used in future elections. The Imperial Parliament is ultimately responsible for whatever happens in Northern Ireland, and it is, therefore, entitled to require that the electoral system shall be one that is consistent with the need for government which defines political issues, educates the public with regard to them, and exercises its powers impartially, economically and efficiently ; and that system would seem to be Proportional Representation, as practised in the one constituency of Northern Ireland which has continued to return members according to the 1920 Act, namely the Queen's University of Belfast, and as practised in the South of Ireland since the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922.

“THREE OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS”

in good government

Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, in *The Smaller Democracies*, dealing with Finland, Norway, Switzerland, Denmark and Sweden, says :

“The recent history of these five small democracies is a stimulating and encouraging thing, and, particularly, their three outstanding achievements.

In *Switzerland*, the brilliant solution of the minorities problem . . . probably the most striking success in history in the art of living together in peace and freedom among people of different races, languages, and religions.

Denmark . . . has invented . . . the co-operator-owner system (of agriculture), perhaps the most scientific and efficient, certainly the most democratic in the world.

Sweden has-gone further towards reconciling the interests of town with country, and of capital with labour, than any other nation, and has been the most successful democracy in avoiding the evils of booms and slumps . . . She has an exceptional wise and able government, and has perhaps the best prospects of any country of establishing something approaching the perfect democracy during the next generation.”

These countries all use a form of P.R., and have done so for a quarter of a century or more.